**Warped Views of the Gospel’s Purpose**

*2 Peter 3:16*

**Introduction**

1. It is true that many things that are good and profitable can become the cause of our destruction if they are misused and/or abused. (EX: different kinds of medicine)
2. The same is true even for the gospel.
   1. **Romans 1:16** – power of God to salvation.
   2. **James 1:21** – word able to save our souls.
   3. **2 Peter 3:15-16** – twisted to our destruction.
3. How can something as good as the gospel be the cause of our destruction?
   1. **Untaught** – *amathēs*; ignorant: — unlearned. (STRONG) (concerning the scriptures) (**cf. 1 Timothy 1:7** – false teachers that don’t understand the word.)
   2. **Unstable** – *asteriktos*; *a*, negative, *sterizo*, “to fix,”…“unstable,”…“unsteadfast.” (VINE) (a result from being untaught)
   3. **Twist** – *strebloo*; “to twist, to torture” (from *streble*, “a winch” or “instrument of torture,” and akin to *strepho*, “to turn”). (VINE) (concerning the scripture)
      1. “to distort a statement so that a false meaning results, twist, distort” (BDAG)
   4. ***“to their own destruction”*** – meaning what is good in Paul’s writings, the scripture, is only good if it is left as it is – the twisted version applied results in destruction.
      1. **Cf. Galatians 1:6-9** – some distort the gospel of Christ into another gospel, WHICH IS NOT ANOTHER GOSPEL – only one “good news”
      2. Some create “another gospel” by misusing the gospel as something else due to an ignorance of its purpose and thus distort it – the result is that it destroys them instead.
4. There are some warped, or “twisted” views of the gospel and its purpose that will cause many to lose their souls. What are some?

*Viewing the Gospel as…*

1. An Escape from Reality
2. Some view the gospel as an escape from the negatives of the world. As something to turn to in order to avoid all conflict, adversity, and trials.
   1. Many romanticize the gospel, making it seem as other-worldly, a place apart from the grit and grime of life where everything always works out.
   2. Instead of understanding it as something which is active in every aspect of life, some view it as an escape from having to face everyday realities – like sin, death, hate, loss, hardship, evil, etc.
3. The gospel makes us confront the negative – **Acts 14:19-22** – Paul stoned, then encourages brethren to endure tribulation.
   1. It isn’t romantic, but messy, and hard – through MANY tribulations.
   2. We are to find joy in such trials – **James 1:2-3**
      1. NOTE: TELLS TRUE STORIES ABOUT PEOPLE THAT NEVER HAD AN IMPROVEMENT IN THEIR LIFE UNDER THE SUN.
      2. **EX: Luke 16:19-22** – Lazarus was a beggar till the day he died.
      3. **James 1:12** – but it promises an end for those who endure.
4. The gospel doesn’t encourage naivete, it prepares us for real life with Christ – **John 15:18-20** – they hated Jesus, so they’ll hate His followers.
   1. We’d like to believe that if we just followed Jesus closely that everyone would like us – but they hated Jesus Himself!
   2. Calls us to persevere even when we stand alone – **2 Timothy 4:16-18**
5. The gospel doesn’t paint a picture of an easy stroll with Jesus, but a race in which we must run hard and endure – **1 Corinthians 9:24-27** – requires self-discipline, and self-denial.
   1. We look to Jesus and are encouraged knowing He had to endure much as well – **Hebrews 12:1-4**
6. An Escape from Responsibility
7. Some view the gospel as an escape from any responsibility. They suggest that sin is innate, and we can’t help it as humans, and the gospel takes away the consequences.
8. The gospel doesn’t just confront sin, but the sinner – **Romans 8:3-4; 12:1-2** – did not just condemn sin in the flesh by paying the price for us but showing that sin is a choice – a choice Jesus didn’t make. Our response should be to change our lives.
   1. The work of God to destroy the works of Satan require our cooperation – **1 John 3:7-9** – have the responsibility to practice righteousness.
9. The grace the gospel offers does not offer us a position to keep sinning – **Romans 6:1-4** – requires us to live the new life of the Christian.
   1. Not to be used as an opportunity for the flesh, but the Spirit is to be followed – **Galatians 5:13, 16-17**
   2. Idea of, “don’t worry about changing, the grace of God will cover you.”
10. The gospel requires responsibility, and all will be held responsible for their actions in the end – **John 12:48; Romans 2:5-6**
11. A Promotional Tool
12. Some exploit the gospel to further themselves. They use its influential power in pretense as a sort of vehicle to promote themselves in various ways.
    1. Promotion of self (popularity – social media), business, politics, etc.
13. The gospel has been abused for self-promotion before – **2 Peter 2:1-3** – exploit with deceptive words.
    1. **2 Corinthians 11:19-20** – false teachers in Corinth doing similar things.
    2. **Galatians 4:17-20** – false teachers in churches of Galatia turning Christians against Paul to gain their loyalty for personal gain.
14. The gospel teaches the opposite of self-promotion – self-denial – **Mark 8:34-37** – it isn’t about us and making any gain in the physical life in the name of Christ but serving Him.
    1. Not to be seen of men – **Matthew 6:1-7** – charitable deeds ***(“righteousness”; NASB***), prayer.
    2. The gospel should not be used as an attention getter. Such is a gross misuse of God’s word.
15. A Political or Governmental Platform
16. Some conflate political, social, and governmental topics with spiritual topics. This brings religion into politics, and politics into religion.
    1. This is not to suggest that political decisions which promote sin should not be viewed negatively and fought in ways authorized by God.
    2. This is not to suggest that the Christian has no right to have political interests or opinions.
    3. However, politics has no place in Christianity, and political matters pale in comparison to biblical matters.
17. The gospel is addressed toward the individual, not the masses, nor governments – **1 Timothy 1:12-16** – Paul spoke about how he, an individual, was saved by the gospel in Christ.
18. If the gospel, and the soldiers of Christ who wield it, was meant to incite change in governments then Jesus had the wrong attitude:
    1. **Matthew 22:17-22** – render unto Caesar – Jesus was subject to an ungodly empire, but still paid taxes.
    2. **John 18:33-37** – despite all the power Jesus had He did not seek to reform the Roman government, nor create a new physical kingdom.
19. The governments of the world play a part in God’s order of things, and have the responsibility to fulfill their role – **Romans 13:1-4**
    1. However, the individual Christian can remain faithful even under the most tyrannical and ungodly bodies of government – Revelation 2:10
20. The greatest influences of the Christian in political matters pertain to their own obedience to God, and prayer – **Matthew 5:13-16; 1 Timothy 2:1-2**
21. A Personalized Life Plan
22. Some view the gospel as if it were personally written for them and tailored to them. They view it as something that will guide them through the physical aspects of life, from work to school and many other secular matters.
    1. This leads to the eisegesis approach to studying scripture – putting our own thoughts into the interpretation.
       1. The claim of a divinely written plan tailored especially for you is a façade.
       2. Really, people navigate through scripture seeking to lift verses that sound good out of context and use them HOW THEY WANT TO, AND IN WAYS THEY THINK BEST (not God).
    2. People search the scriptures so God will speak to them about their “personal path to a better, more successful future.”
23. The gospel is addressed to all – **John 3:16** – God so loved “the world.”
    1. **1 Corinthians 14:36-38** – concerning the regulation of spiritual gifts.
       1. Such was not something tailored simply for the Corinthians – it wasn’t as if these regulations didn’t apply to them – like they had their own plan.
       2. ***(v. 38) – “But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.” (NASB)***
       3. You don’t get a different standard – IT’S SAME AS EVERYONE ELSE.
    2. **Romans 3:23; 1:16** – ALL have sinned, and the gospel is the power to salvation for EVERYONE – SAME BOOK TO BE READ AND FOLLOWED BY ALL.
24. The gospel does not speak of many different plans, but a series of things which are only one – **Ephesians 4:1-6** – requires unity.
25. The gospel speaks of two general paths, either of which everyone is on – **Matthew 7:13-14**
26. The danger? – If it is about aa personal plan for me, and I approach a scripture that doesn’t seem to fit the picture I had in mind, I will likely ignore it and move on.
27. God’s plan for everyone – **Ecclesiastes 12:13-14** – faithful obedience to Him, and then judgment.

**Conclusion**

1. The gospel is the most wonderful, powerful writing in all the world, and of all time.
2. It is intended for the greatest good of all, the salvation of man to the glory of God.
3. However, if anyone holds a warped view of the gospel, they will twist it to their own destruction. (**cf. 2 Peter 3:16**)